Ex. 6 - Personal Privacy

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Sent: Wed 5/11/2016 7:26:07 PM
Subject: FW: Blog from Joel B on the stakeholder meetings

FYi

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Subject: Blog from Joel B on the stakeholder meetings

Good Afternoon:

A few regions have requested a copy of Joel's blog – which announces the three stakeholder meetings that will be hosted this summer.

Thanks

Maria

Apr 26, 2016

Moving Forward for America's Drinking Water

21 Comments

By Joel Beauvais

Our nation's record of progress in advancing public health under the Safe Drinking Water Act is significant. But too little water in the West, flooding from extreme weather in the Midwest and Southeast, and the recent water quality issues in Flint, Michigan have rightly focused national attention on America's drinking water. As a country, we can and must do more to make sure that every American has access to safe drinking water. EPA is committed to working together with our governmental partners, communities and stakeholders to strengthen the nation's drinking water systems. That is why, today, we are announcing the next steps in that effort. Beginning next month, EPA will lead a series of engagements to inform a national action plan on drinking water, to be released by the end of the year. In addition, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) has begun a new study of the science and technology relevant to ensuring the safety of the nation's drinking water.

THE PROGRESS WE'VE MADE

With public attention rightly focused on drinking water quality in communities across the country, it's worth remembering how far we've come in providing clean safe drinking water. Before Congress passed the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1974 – granting EPA the authority and the funding to take action and affirming the leading role of states and municipalities – more than 40 percent of our nation's drinking water systems failed to meet even the most basic health standards.

Today, over 300 million Americans depend on 152,000 public drinking water systems and collectively drink more than one billion glasses of tap water each day. Our agency has established standards for more than 90 contaminants, and our compliance data show that more than 90 percent of the nation's water systems consistently meet those standards. Clean water is the lifeblood of healthy, vibrant communities and our nation's economy. Making sure that *all* Americans have reliable access to safe drinking water is essential, and a core task for EPA.

Over the years, through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund established by Congress in 1996, $30 billion in low-interest loans have supported infrastructure projects that are delivering drinking water to thousands of communities across the country. This has supplemented local and state finance of drinking water infrastructure – especially in low-income communities and where public health risk is the highest.

And, relatedly, our Clean Water Rule is a major step forward to protect our nation's precious water resources, including streams that are the source of drinking water for 117 million Americans – over one third of the country's population.

We've come so far. But our work is far from done.

NEW AND REMAINING CHALLENGES

The crisis in Flint, Michigan has brought to the forefront the challenges many communities across the country are facing, including from lead pipes that carry their drinking water and uneven publicly-available information around drinking water quality. At the same time, as new technology advances our detection ability, we're detecting new contaminants in our water from industrial chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and other sources that can pose risks to public health.

And science now shows that climate change – especially the extreme weather and drought impacts it brings – are placing added stress on water resources and creating uncertainty in many regions of the country.

In some areas, pollution threatens upstream sources like rivers and lakes that feed into our drinking water. Hundreds of thousands of Americans were cut off from drinking water because of a chemical spill in Charleston, West Virginia and a harmful algal bloom on Lake Erie that impacted the drinking water for Toledo, Ohio. We need to protect our drinking water sources and the Clean Water Rule is critical to that effort.

Meanwhile, EPA data show that at least $384 billion in improvements will be needed through 2030 to maintain, upgrade and replace thousands of miles of pipe and thousands of treatment plants, storage tanks and water distribution systems that make up our country's water infrastructure. And if local and state governments do not lean into these investments and instead defer and delay, rebuilding our water infrastructure will only become more expensive.

Too often, the toughest infrastructure challenges are found in low-income, minority communities – both large and small – where inadequate revenue and investment have left many water systems crumbling from age and neglect, and where citizens lack the resources and timely and accurate information about their water quality to do something about it.

These are big challenges and EPA recognizes that no one can tackle them alone.

MOVING FORWARD – ENGAGING KEY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS ON A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SAFE DRINKING WATER

That's why we're launching a concerted, strategic engagement with key partners and stakeholders – including state, tribal and local governments, drinking water utilities, and public health, environmental and community stakeholders – to develop and implement a national action plan to address the critical drinking water challenges and opportunities before us.

EPA has already intensified our work with state drinking water programs with a priority focus on implementation of the federal Lead and Copper Rule, including directing EPA

staff to meet with officials from every state to make sure they're addressing any high lead levels and fully implementing the current rule.

We sent letters to every governor and every state environmental and/or health commissioner of states that implement the Safe Drinking Water Act, urging them to work with EPA on steps to strengthen protections against lead and on a broader set of critical priorities to keep our drinking water safe. We're following up with each and every state on actions to increase public health protection, transparency and accountability.

We're now taking the next step forward. In the coming weeks, EPA will launch a targeted engagement with key state co-regulators, regulated utilities, and nongovernmental stakeholders on priority issues related to implementing the Safe Drinking Water Act. The focus of that engagement will include:

- Advancing Next Generation Safe Drinking Water Act Implementation: Identify key opportunities and initiate work on critical next steps to strengthen and modernize state and federal implementation of Safe Drinking Water Act regulations and programs, including ways to increase public data transparency and accountability.

- Addressing Environmental Justice and Equity in Infrastructure Funding: Identify additional steps federal, state, tribal and local governments, and utilities can take to better ensure that drinking water infrastructure challenges of low-income environmental justice communities and small systems are being appropriately prioritized and addressed, including through increased information, sharing and replicating best practices, and building community capacity.

- Strengthening Protections against Lead in Drinking Water: Prioritize opportunities to collaborate and make progress on implementing the current Lead and Copper Rule, particularly in environmental justice communities and expand and strengthen opportunities for stakeholder engagement to support the development of a revised rule.

- Emerging and Unregulated Contaminant Strategies: Develop and implement improved approaches through which EPA, state, tribal and local governments, utilities and other stakeholders can work together to prioritize and address the challenges posed by emerging and unregulated contaminants such as algal toxins and perfluorinated compounds (PFCs).

In each of these areas, we will work together with our partners and stakeholders to set a strategic agenda and identify and implement priority, near-term actions we can take in the coming months. By the end of this year, we will release a summary of our progress and a national action plan for the future.

At the same time, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) is beginning a new study of the science and technology relevant to ensuring the Nation's drinking-water quality. PCAST will seek input from EPA, other relevant agencies, and a wide range of experts on ideas on investments in new technology and

infrastructure to protect drinking water resources, detect pollutants, advance treatment to remove contaminants and pathogens, and develop improved infrastructure for the future. Following this review, PCAST will recommend actions the federal government can take, in concert with cities and states, to promote application of the best available science and technology to drinking-water safety. This builds on current efforts by the Administration to draw on the power of existing and breakthrough technology to boost innovation in water supply.

We owe it to our kids today and to future generations to take steps now and develop future actions to ensure that all Americans have affordable access to high-quality water when and where they need it. We look forward to partnering with the public and stakeholders in the development of this plan.